

ON SOME BIRDS FROM CAPE YORK, NORTH QUEENSLAND.

BY ERNST HARTERT.

THE following notes are made from specimens which formed part of a large and fine collection brought together at Cape York by Mr. Albert S. Meek's collectors during the months June and July, 1898. The excellent preservation and notes which were made in accordance with our instructions and on labels provided by us for the purpose, induced me to study some of the species, and these notes are the result of my investigations.

In addition to an unexpected new species of *Poëphila*, the collection contained a number of forms which differ subspecifically from those of other parts of Australia. The fauna of the Cape York Peninsula is of special interest not only in comparison with Australia, but also because so many Papuan forms extend there. There seems to be a tendency in many of the birds from Cape York to become brighter and smaller than those inhabiting the more southern parts of Australia. No doubt several more subspecies will be separated in future, when more material is available for comparison from different parts of Australia.

1. *Pachycephala peninsulæ* Hart.

In *Bull. B. O. Club*, v. VIII. p. 33 this form is described as follows: "♂ Top of head ashy brown; remainder of upper surface, including tail, olive-green. Remiges blackish; inner webs with whitish borders; outer webs edged with greenish olive. Lores ashy; an indistinct pale buffy eyebrow. Sides of head ashy brown. Throat white (with indistinct grey striations). Breast light yellowish grey, with darker shaft-lines; abdomen pale sulphur-yellow, with dark shaft-stripes. Under wing-coverts white, with a faint yellow tinge, those towards the bend of the wing brownish, with a yellow tinge. Iris brown, feet light bluish slate. Bill brown. Wing 78-79, tail 63, culmen 16.5, tarsus 20 mm."

Younger individuals have the crown uniform with the back and the quills rufous on the outer webs.

This interesting form is closely allied to *P. griseiceps* from Dutch New Guinea, which is considered to be the same as the Arn bird, and I believe rightly. It differs from *P. griseiceps* in being slightly smaller, in having distinct striations, in the form of shaft-lines, to the underside, especially to the breast, and in being more greenish, much less brownish and olive on the upperside. The crown is also purer grey, not so brownish.

Pachycephala alberti (Nov. Zool. v. V. p. 523) has also the distinct striations on the underside, like *P. peninsulæ*, but it has a longer beak, and is as olive-brown above as *P. griseiceps*.

A bird from Gagi, near Waigiu, is another form, a large subspecies of *P. griseiceps*, without a name, but resembling *P. griseiceps jobiensis* (Nov. Zool. v. V. p. 523).

2. *Artamus leucorhynchus parvirostris* subsp. nov.

Notwithstanding the various statements, by ornithological authorities, that the Australian specimens of *Artamus leucorhynchus* could not be distinguished from those of other countries, I noticed at once that they had strikingly small bills, and when comparing them with our large series from many localities I found that the Australian specimens were exceedingly much alike, and that the exposed part of their culmen was generally 15 to 16 mm. and never exceeded 17 mm., while it was 18 to 22 mm. in specimens from other localities. The difference, though numerically slight, is striking in the specimens. Those from Celebes and the Sunda Islands have the largest beaks, those from Timor, New Guinea, and from the Philippines, have them generally somewhat smaller, but the differences are very small and not constant enough for even subspecific separation, while those from the Andamans have their beaks of the same small size as those from Queensland! It would therefore, according to the diagnosis of my new subspecies, be necessary to call them also *A. l. parvirostris*. I believe it is very interesting, even for those who do not accept this subspecies, to know that *A. leucorhynchus* is not so constant as ornithologists made us believe, and that (as in some other cases) a form deviates from its average form in the centre (?) of its distribution in a similar way in both directions towards the outer limits of its area. Other such examples are *Cacatua triton*, *Nyctidromus albicollis*, *Macropteryx mystacea*.

I cannot agree with Sharpe and Salvadori in rejecting the oldest Linnaean name *leucorhynchus*. Brisson's figure is correct, his description leaves no doubt, and only this form inhabits the Philippines, so that there is no reason for rejecting this name; in fact, there are many less certain names in use in ornithology than *A. leucorhynchus*. The upperside may, in contradiction to the white underside, have been termed black without going far wrong.

3. *Piezorhynchus leucotis* (Gould).

A nice series from Cape York, whence the type came. The *male* is well figured in the "Supplement to the Birds of Australia." The *female* differs very much from the adult *male*. It has no black on the throat, has a buff shade across the lower throat, is dark brown above, has only white edges to the scapulars and the chest and sides of body brownish. The young *male* resembles the adult *female*. ♂ ad.: "Iris brown, feet slate-colour, bill bluish slate-colour with a black tip."

4. *Arses kaupi* Gould.

The young *male* (or *female*?) has a rusty brown band across the chest, no black chin, the collar on the hind-neck much narrower, upperside brownish. Another specimen, also marked "♂," and evidently becoming black on the back, is without a rusty band across the breast. The adult *male* has the bill "chalky blue, the eye surrounded by dark blue eyelids, the iris brown, feet bluish slate-colour."

5. *Poecilodryas albifacies* Sharpe.

♂♂♀, Cape York, 21. 7., 5. 8., 7. 8. 1898. "Iris brown, feet light horn-colour, bill black."

I cannot perceive any differences between New Guinea specimens and those from Cape York. The bird is described from New Guinea.

6. *Myiagra plumbea concinna* Gould.

There does not seem to be any difference between *Myiagra plumbea*, from the Louisiade Islands and New Guinea, and *M. concinna*, from Queensland, except that the latter has a deeper black loral line! The two forms can only be regarded as two very close subspecies.

7. *Rhipidura setosa isura* Gould.

One fine *male* of this very distinct subspecies. Cf. Nov. Zool. v. V. pp. 525-6, where I divided *Rh. setosa* into five subspecies.

8. *Rhipidura rufifrons* (Lath.).

A *male*, shot 25. 7. 1898, has the wing only 69.5 mm. long.

9. *Malurus dorsalis* (Lewin).

Specimens from Cape York seem to be smaller than those from North-western Australia. Wing of ♂ 40—42 mm.

10. (?) *Sericornis magnirostris* (Gould).

Three skins from Cape York have very distinct whitish tips to the series of greater wing-coverts, and are rather brownish on the chest and flanks. Their iris is "blood-red, feet light horn-colour, bill dark brown."

11. (?) *Gerygone conspicillata* Gray.

♂ Cape York, 23. 6. 1898. "Iris bright hazel, feet slate-colour, bill black." According to the descriptions of Sharpe in *Cat. B. v. IV.* this specimen is *G. conspicillata* and not *G. magnirostris*. It agrees with specimens from Fergusson Island, which I consider to be *G. conspicillata*.

12. *Gerygone personata* Gould.

"Iris light red, feet bluish slate-colour, bill black and dark."

13. *Zosterops westernensis vegeta* snbsp. nov.

The *Zosterops* from Cape York differs from specimens from New South Wales and Victoria (the type is from Western Port in Victoria) in being smaller and the colours somewhat clearer. The flanks are less brown, the under tail-coverts bright sulphur-yellow instead of white, with a faint tinge of yellow, as in *Z. westernensis westernensis*. "Iris light brown, feet dark slate-colour, bill black, bluish slate-colour towards the base of the lower jaw." Types shot in July, Cape York. The *female* is like the *male*; one of the *females* has a sulphur-yellow wash on the middle of the abdomen, ♂ wing 56—57, ♀ wing 56—57 mm.

Zosterops westernensis tephroleura, from Lord Howe's Island, is more like the Cape York bird than like typical *Z. westernensis*, but larger, the wing more than 60 mm.

Zosterops westernensis flaviceps, from the Fiji Islands, seems to differ constantly from the Australian forms of *Z. westernensis* by having light-coloured feet and bills, though the colour of the plumage is very much like that of *Z. westernensis westernensis*. (Cf. Sharpe in *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* v. IX. pp. 156-8.)

14. *Myzomela pectoralis* J. Gould.

I am not aware that the striking resemblance of the upperside of the *female* to the upperside of *Sittella striata* from the same country has ever been noticed. It is a perfect "mimicry" with regard to the black cap, the striped back, the white rump and upper tail-coverts, and the black tail with white tips, only the colour of the bill is different. The underside is totally different in the two birds. "Bill and feet black, iris brown."

15. *Ptilotis flava* J. Gould (?).

One skin, marked ♂, differs from the specimens of *P. flava* in the British Museum in having shorter wings and an indication of a defined dusky cap on the crown. "Iris dark brown, feet light greenish slate, bill black." Wing 87 mm.

16. *Ptilotis notata* J. Gould ;

and

17. *Ptilotis gracilis* J. Gould.

These two species, which have generally been confounded, and which in the skin hardly differ, except in size, were both found commonly at Cape York. Mr. Le Souëf (*Ibis* 1898, p. 56, pl. I.) has shown that *gracilis* differs from *notata* in being much smaller, and also in its life-history. In *Nov. Zool.* 1898 p. 527 I have shown that *P. notata* and *P. analoga* are two distinct species. We have thus three closely allied species, and it would seem that *P. notata* and *P. gracilis*, as well as *P. notata* and *P. analoga*, are found together, the former two in New Guinea, the latter two in Queensland, while we have not yet a proof that *P. analoga* and *P. gracilis* occur together. I hope to be able to publish some more details about these forms before long.

18. *Poephila nigrotecta* Hart.

In *Bull. B. O. Club*, June 1899, p. 59, this surprising little novelty is described as follows:—

"Similar to *P. cincta*, from which it differs in being considerably smaller, and in having the upper tail-coverts black like the rump." In *P. cincta* the upper tail-coverts are perfectly white, not black with white tips, as described in Butler's "Foreign Finches," where, however, an excellent plate is given. Total length about 100 mm., wing 59—60 (about 63 in *P. cincta*), tail 41, culmen 9·5 mm.

There are two skins in the collection, a ♂ and a ♀, both shot at Cape York on 18. 6. 1898. "Iris reddish brown, feet red, bill black."

19. *Poëphila leucotis* J. Gould.

Two fine *males* of this rare species shot on 20. 6. 1898. "Iris reddish brown, feet bright red, bill light yellow."

20. *Aegintha temporalis* (Lath.).

Three *males* have the wing about 2 mm. shorter than other specimens and the back rather more golden. Comparison of a larger material will probably justify the separation of the Cape York bird as a subspecies.

21. *Bathilda ruficauda clarescens* subsp. nov.

An adult *male*, Cape York 14. 6. 1898, is smaller than all examples in our collection, the red extends nearly over the whole crown, encircles the eye, and extends further down on the throat, and the abdomen is rather bright yellow. "Iris light red, feet dirty yellow, bill dark red."

Wing 50, tail 45 mm.

22. *Alcyone azurea pulchra* (J. Gould).

The collection contains a very fine series of this Kingfisher. I agree with Dr. Sharpe, who, in *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* v. 17 p. 169, calls it a subspecies of *A. azurea*, but the characters and the distribution of the two forms, as given in the *Cat. B.*, are not very clear. The deeper and brighter cinnamon or bay colour of the under surface is not a character to distinguish this form with any certainty, for a number of those before me (either younger birds or individuals in older, more faded plumage) are paler than any *A. azurea azurea* I ever saw. The richer and more purplish blue colour of the upperside is generally apparent enough, but sometimes difficult to see. Another character, however, is not mentioned by Sharpe, viz., the smaller size, especially the shorter bill of *pulchra*. The bill in *A. a. azurea* is about 46—49 mm. (exposed part of culmen measured), the wing 75—79. In *A. a. pulchra* these measurements are : exposed culmen : 42—44, wing 72—74 mm. The flanks are more suffused with lilac in *A. a. pulchra*, and the blue purplish extends sometimes along the flanks, but by no means always.

If *A. a. pulchra* is the northern representative of *A. azurea azurea*, then Sharpe's specimens *x, y, z, a¹, and b¹*, in the list of specimens of *azurea*, must belong to *pulchra*, and I think they do so undoubtedly. "The iris is dark brown, feet bright red, bill black, whitish at the utmost tip."

23. *Alcyone pusilla* J. Gould.

♂ : "Iris dark brown, feet dark smoky brown, bill black."

24. *Syma flavirostris* J. Gould.

Four *females* and one *male*. This species (or subspecies) differs from *S. torotoro* in being paler and more greenish on the back and wings, and having invariably a black mark along the anterior half of the culmen. The underside is rather pale, throat and middle of abdomen sometimes quite white. I have already on a former

occasion pointed out that the characters of the two species are reversed in the *Cat. B. Brit. Mus.* v. XVI. pp. 196-8, both in the "Key" and in the description. "Iris dark brown, feet and bill orange."

25. *Dacelo leachei* Vig. & Horsf.

"Iris silvery white, feet horn-colour, maxilla blackish, mandible whitish horn-colour."

Two males from Cape York seem to belong undoubtedly to *D. leachei leachei*, and not to *cervina*.

26. *Ptistes erythropterus coccineopterus* J. Gould.

The very short wing shows the single specimen to belong to the subspecies *coccineopterus* Gould. "Iris brown, feet black, bill red with pale cadmium tip."

27. *Trichoglossus novaehollandiae* (Gm.).

Several skins from Cape York are rather small and brightly coloured, and may belong to a northern subspecies.

28. *Geophaps scripta* (Temm.).

One male, iris brown, bill blackish, feet dark purple. This bird agrees in coloration with *scripta*, but the wing is only 140 mm.

ON *MYZOMELA RUBROCUCULLATA* TRISTR.

By ERNST HARTERT.

THIS bird is described in *Ibis* 1889, p. 228, as having been found on St. Aignan. The head all round (except the lores, which are black) and a broad line along all the upper parts to the upper tail-coverts scarlet, remainder of the plumage black, inner edges of the remiges greyish white. Bill black, feet dark brown. Wing 74 (285, as given by Tristram, is too short, it should be 295), tail 53 mm. I am indebted to the authorities of the Liverpool Museum for the loan of the type of this most interesting species. No such bird, however, was found by Meek on St. Aignan, or on any of the other islands of the Louisiade Archipelago. I cannot help suspecting that *M. rubrocucullata* Tristr. really came from one of the Solomons and not from St. Aignan, where it would seem to be more out of its way than in the Solomons. It is hardly to be expected that a collector like Meek should have missed such a very conspicuous bird. There is no original collector's label on the type of *M. rubrocucullata* Tristr.

In the "List of the Birds from St. Aignan," *antei*, p. 206, the mention of this species is omitted.